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Central
Intelligence

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CPAS/CIG

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National Intelligence Daily

Wednesday
14 December 1983

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CPAS NID 83-291JX

14 December 1983

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WARSAW PACT-NATO: Status of MBFR Talks

The USSR's refusal to set a date for the next round of MBFR talks is intended primarily to apply pressure against NATO's position on INF. []

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The Soviets announced privately at the informal session in Vienna yesterday that they would agree "later through diplomatic channels" on a resumption date. The US delegation reports that Soviet representatives privately refused to say more than that the decision had been made under "circumstances well known to the West." They asserted that they would not go beyond their statement at the press briefing following the final plenary session of this round tomorrow. []

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Comment: As with START, Moscow wants to make West Europeans anxious about the future of the MBFR talks in order to erode their support for INF. The statement on MBFR is more ambiguous than the announcement concerning START on 8 December. The official plenary statement scheduled for tomorrow may be more specific. []

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The West European Allies were caught off guard by the Soviet action. They had hoped to use MBFR and the Conference on Disarmament in Europe to demonstrate their continuing commitment to arms control. []

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Some NATO Allies have urged the US to approve a new Western MBFR initiative to respond to recent signs of a more flexible Soviet attitude. They believe MBFR is especially important, now that the INF talks and START are in limbo. []

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CANADA: Trudeau's Peace Initiative

Prime Minister Trudeau's visit to Washington tomorrow is part of his campaign to promote the resumption and expansion of disarmament negotiations. []

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The specifics of Trudeau's initiative—a Five-Power Conference, a new Western proposal for MBFR, revitalization of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, high-level attendance at the Conference on Disarmament in Europe, and several confidence-building measures—are aimed at reopening communications between the US and the USSR. Trudeau also hopes to prompt the NATO Allies and Third World countries and organizations to put pressure on the superpowers to resume disarmament talks. []

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Since late October, Trudeau has outlined his proposals to the leaders of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Vatican, Italy, West Germany, the UK, Japan, the Commonwealth Conference, and China. His personal envoy also has briefed Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko. The initiative so far has received a sympathetic hearing but few specific commitments of support. []

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Comment: Trudeau apparently believes that Washington and Moscow each has some responsibility for the breakdown of the Geneva talks and that each will have to amend its bargaining position before arms control talks can resume. In the period before the Conference on Disarmament in Europe, Trudeau probably will try to focus attention on what he sees as the intransigence of the superpowers, trying thereby to put pressure on them to facilitate reconvening the negotiations. []

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Although Trudeau is frustrated by his failure to elicit firm support, he is unlikely to abandon his campaign. He almost certainly is pursuing his initiative because of his personal commitment to arms control, and not only to revive the Liberal Party's political fortunes. The Prime Minister probably will not alter his current course of action if future polls fail to detect improvement in his party's election prospects. []

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Turkey: Key Members of the New Government

Prime Minister Turgut Ozal

Age 56 . . . chairman of the conservative Motherland Party . . . favors liberal economic policies . . . likely to continue Turkey's traditional foreign policy based on membership in NATO and its ties with the US.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Vahit Halefoglu

Age 64 . . . articulate and intelligent career diplomat . . . knowledgeable about Soviet matters . . . maintains "correct" attitude toward the US.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State Kaya Erdem

Age 54 . . . longtime friend of Ozal . . . Finance Minister during 1980-82 . . . an astute bargainer with a methodic approach to decisionmaking.

Minister of Justice Nejat Eldem

Age 55 . . . a founder of Ozal's Motherland Party . . . an experienced administrator . . . an inspector for the Minister of Interior in the early 1960s . . . served during the 1970s as governor of two rural provinces.

Minister of Finance Vural Arikan

Age 54 . . . generally acknowledged as one of Turkey's best tax lawyers . . . has worked as a deputy treasury inspector, an internal revenue agent, tax attorney, and instructor on tax laws . . . founder of several companies.

Minister of Interior Ali Tanriyar

Age 69 . . . a founder of the Motherland Party . . . no technical qualifications for his position . . . a practicing physician.

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TURKEY: New Government

The new government, which was approved by President Evren yesterday, consists of moderates and technocrats who will be primarily concerned with economic reform and internal security.

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Evren accepted Prime Minister Ozal's recommendations without change. Turkey's first civilian cabinet in three years is smaller than its predecessors and contains only 20 ministers and the Deputy Prime Minister. All but the Foreign and Agriculture Ministers are members of the Grand National Assembly.

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Comment: The final list contains few names identified originally as favored by either Evren or Ozal, suggesting they bargained long and hard over the appointments before arriving at compromises. It also suggests that both leaders support the policy established by the military government to exclude from office most politicians associated with past civilian administrations.

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Economic problems, including 20-percent unemployment and a 30-percent inflation rate, will provide the toughest challenges for the new government. Ozal, as well as the Finance and Commerce Ministers, has solid economic credentials and will continue to encourage the development of a free market economy.

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The new government also will work to prevent Turkey from returning to the near chaos that provoked the military coup in September 1980. The Justice Minister, who has some law enforcement experience, probably will advocate strong antiterrorist measures.

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Evren almost certainly will remain in charge of foreign policy and is unlikely to allow Ozal free rein on many issues. Ozal nevertheless has indicated that he wants to pay considerable personal attention to foreign affairs.

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Cyprus and its impact on Turkey's relations with the US will receive a high priority for the next several months. Ozal's appointment of Vahit Halefoglu—a former Ambassador to Bonn and to Moscow—as Foreign Minister suggests that he will put increasing emphasis on East-West relations.

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BULGARIA-NICARAGUA: Arms Delivery Concluding

The unloading of the Bulgarian arms carrier at the Nicaraguan port of El Bluff is nearing completion. Overhead photography of the inland port of Rama taken last week shows about 16 antitank guns were being readied for transport by truck. [REDACTED]

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Comment: Deliveries from Bulgaria have accounted for most of the major weaponry Nicaragua has received in the past year. As was the case with the earlier deliveries, this shipment probably reflects Moscow's desire to provide Managua with military aid while avoiding a conspicuous Soviet role in arms deliveries. Nicaragua's military buildup is continuing at a time when the Sandinistas are proposing that an immediate arms freeze be discussed in the Contadora peace talks. [REDACTED]

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FRANCE: More Leftist Election Losses

Results of 12 first-round elections held last weekend for various national and regional offices show that the Socialists continue to stumble. The US Embassy reports that a moderate leftist in one National Assembly contest managed only with difficulty to beat back a challenge from the right, while in another election rightists easily won over leftist candidates. Both Socialists and Communists made poor showings in seven local elections, but the Socialists' losses were more spectacular in the number of posts lost. Overall, the leftist share of the vote fell 15 to 17 percentage points. [REDACTED]

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Comment: These losses extend the decline of the left and may stir increased friction in the Socialist-Communist coalition. The two parties have squabbled about the responsibility for recent election defeats, with the Socialists blaming Communist involvement in voting fraud. If the Communists are unable to resist this opportunity to even the score, the truce arranged earlier this month between the governing parties probably will collapse amid a new wave of recriminations. [REDACTED]

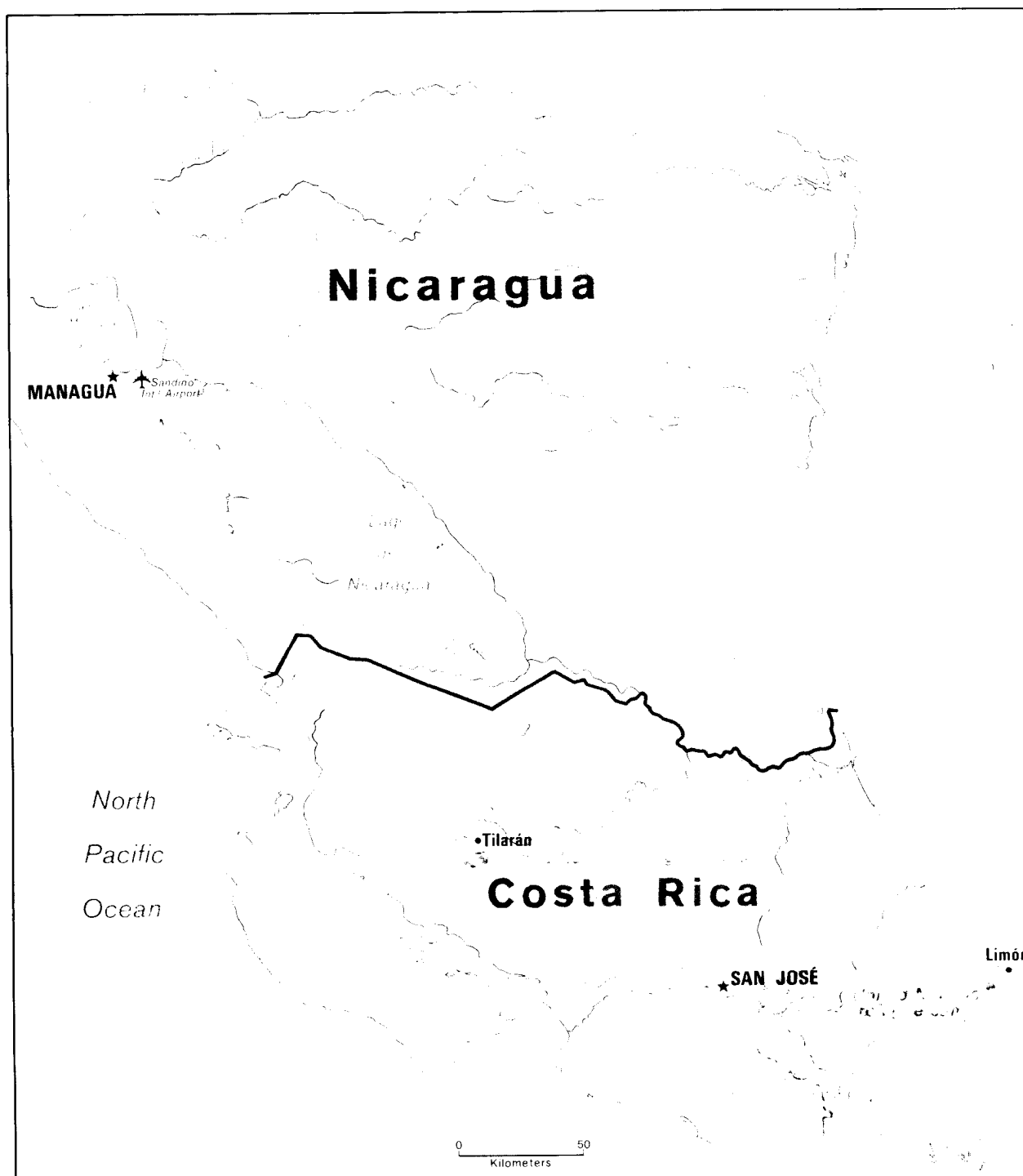
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NICARAGUA: Human Rights Abuses

The US Embassy in San Jose reports that a number of Nicaraguan refugees in Costa Rica have claimed that they witnessed or were subjected to brutal actions by Sandinista security forces trying to reduce civilian support for insurgent operations in southern Nicaragua. With the start of the dry season, there has been an increase in the activities of anti-Sandinista groups. In the past three weeks, an average of 200 Nicaraguans per week have fled to Costa Rica, saturating refugee camps at Tilaran and Limon. []

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Comment: Human rights abuses against the Miskito Indian population in Nicaragua have been widely reported over the past two years, but accounts of brutality against the majority non-Indian segment of the population have been less common. If the repression continues, more refugees are likely to arrive in Costa Rica. []

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NETHERLANDS-US: Policy on Defense Purchases

The Dutch Government is under pressure to maintain its tough policy on the purchase from the US of the Patriot air defense missile. Officials in the Defense Ministry have told the US Embassy that compensatory provisions of some sort, preferably US purchases of Dutch defense materiel, amounting to 50 percent of Patriot's price are required to ensure the deal. The Embassy reports that the Dutch are linking other purchases of US equipment to a satisfactory deal on Patriot and that stories of Dutch dissatisfaction with current financial proposals have appeared in the press. []

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Comment: The Hague has been unhappy over what it calculates is a 10-to-1 imbalance in defense purchases with the US, and it is convinced that the West Germans were given a 50-percent offset for the Patriot. The Dutch would like to replace the Nike missile, but they will insist that the Patriot deal give the appearance of meeting their requirements. A purchase unfavorable to the Netherlands would embarrass the government and anger key defense officials, and this could affect bilateral defense cooperation. []

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UK: Union Leadership Divided

An illegal strike by the printers' union scheduled to start yesterday has been called off, apparently because there was no consensus within the Trades Union Congress to support it. Strike actions by the printers—sometimes violent—began five months ago, and the courts have responded by freezing union assets and assessing fines. []

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Comment: The dispute is the first test of Prime Minister Thatcher's legislation limiting sympathy picketing, allowing companies to obtain injunctions against strikes, and voiding closed-shop agreements. The government has kept a low profile, thus encouraging the public to view the dispute as one between the unions and the court. Moderate union leaders are wary of condoning illegal actions, fearing that further defiance of the courts may heighten tensions in the Trades Union Congress and cause the faltering rank and file to withdraw their support. High unemployment, heavy job losses, fines, and even arrests of union leaders are likely to induce caution, but the dispute may continue for some time. []

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25X1**HUNGARY: Trade Union Leader Replaced**

The government's transfer last week of Sandor Gaspar from his post as Secretary General of the trade union movement to the largely honorific union presidency reconfirms Budapest's commitment to austerity and to continued economic reform. Gaspar this year has increasingly opposed policies requiring sacrifices by industrial workers, and last month he publicly criticized the government for excessive retail price increases and the party for exercising too much control over the union. The US Embassy reports that Gaspar's successor, Lajos Mehes, lacks an independent political base and will adhere more closely to the leadership's line. []

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Comment: The action against Gaspar is unlikely to provoke worker protests. Although Gaspar probably will remain active in international labor affairs, he will have little say in day-to-day union business. At the same time, the leadership no longer has to contend with a strong spokesman who can strengthen and focus worker resistance to change. Gaspar, however, apparently will retain his seat on the Politburo. []

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